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Musa Jalalov  
*Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action*

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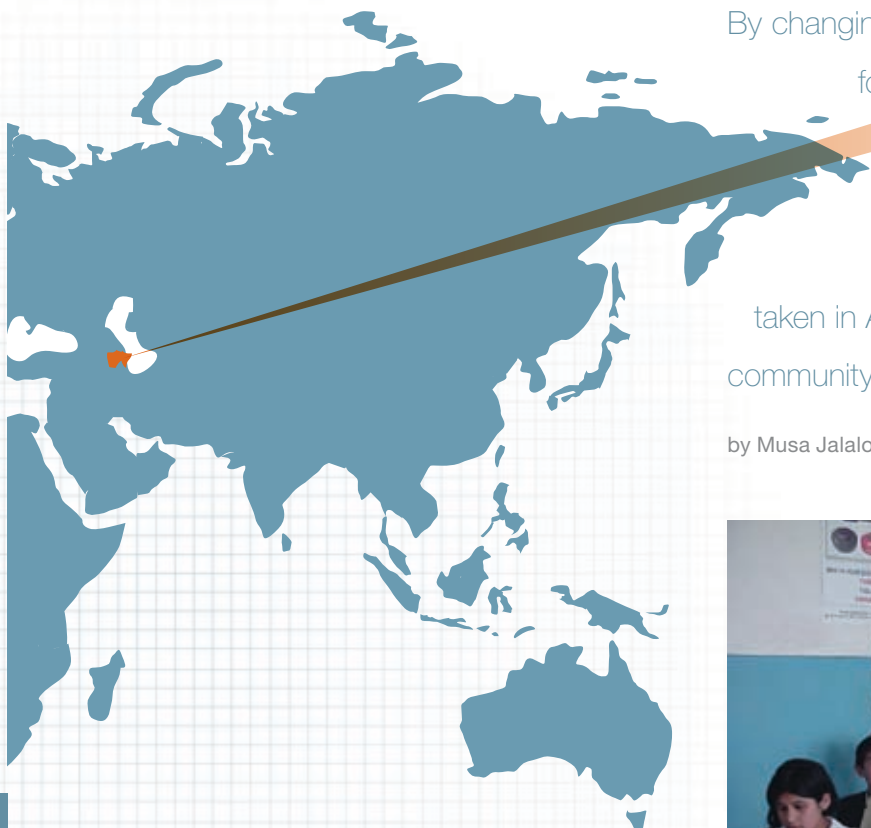
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# New Approaches and Strategies for MRE in Azerbaijan



By changing its approach, the **Azerbaijan** National Agency for Mine Action has been able to achieve much success in its mine-risk education program. As Head of the MRE Department for ANAMA, Musa Jalalov describes the new steps being taken in Azerbaijan to educate the public and involve the community in mine action.

by Musa Jalalov [ Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action ]

**A**ltogether, new initiatives, approaches and precedents are what make up the style of the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action's Mine Risk Education Team. Over the years, the ANAMA MRE Team has become one of the most progressive MRE programs because of its initiatives. For example, the signing of the Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding between the Minister of Education, the UNICEF/Azerbaijan Country Office Head and the ANAMA Director allowed the integration of MRE into the school curricula and formed community-based MRE committees in targeted districts that are currently acting as volunteer representatives of ANAMA in front close and bordering areas.<sup>1</sup>

Integration between different aspects of mine action in Azerbaijan can be seen as another initiative, and this year was no exception. As part of the MRE School Programme, ANAMA conducted 13 successful MRE train-the-trainer programs for 200 teachers at 100 schools, sponsored by UNICEF, the United States European Command and ANAMA. The ANAMA MRE Team together with the Ministry of Education organised and supported the process technically and ANAMA/UNICEF Master Trainers executed the trainings.

A unique aspect of the trainings was that they were monitored directly by donor organisations' MRE experts and thus emphasized a new approach in the implementation of MRE programmes in Azerbaijan.



MRE class for the 6th graders.  
All photos courtesy of ANAMA MRE Team

## Benefits of Integrating MRE into School Curricula

When MRE is integrated into the curriculum of schools, not only does financial support from the government increase for MRE activities, but also the importance of mine-clearance issues among the population rises. Therefore, ANAMA recommends this initiative be considered a priority task for MRE programme implementers in any country.

Currently, 1,520 teachers at 790 schools teach the MRE course in Azerbaijan, reaching 32,500 students. The Ministry of Education pays the expenses for the training, and the heads of district education departments are responsible for supervising the classes. The responsibility of teachers and heads of schools increases and thus the attitude towards MRE changes. For the teachers and community leaders it becomes a humanitarian task, or, rather, a noble duty which they perform in order to help and protect their communities and fellow citizens.

Since integrating MRE into schools, students have become more sensitive to the problem. After being taught MRE, they begin to inform the authorities and their teachers when they find mines, unexploded ordnance and unknown objects and they share where these items were found.

### Function of MRE Committees

Another phase or a “core competency” of the ANAMA programme is the establishment of community-based MRE committees in 60 villages and settlements, welcomed by local communities. All activities of these committees are performed by volunteers who do not receive financial support from ANAMA for their generous work. They report monthly to the district MRE coordinators, who are appointed by the heads of district executive authority. ANAMA headquarters, in turn, receives reports on a monthly basis. This structure works and has been accepted by all targeted community representatives. ANAMA provides them with MRE materials when there is a need.

ANAMA is using new communication tools, which we think can be of great help in countries that also have mine/UXO-contamination problems. We have established a “hotline” by simply adding the office and mobile phone numbers of the national and regional ANAMA offices to the bottom of posters and billboards erected in, around or close to contaminated areas. The posters have helped people become more informed. People now understand the real danger posed by mines and UXO and actively inform ANAMA deminers about what they encounter.

The role of ANAMA implementing partners—Relief Azerbaijan, the International Eurasia Press Fund or the teams working for ANAMA to execute MRE activities—is large. We have a stable MRE implementing partner capacity that helps various types of educational/promotional tasks become realised. MRE is delivered when the clearance operations first begin or when clearance is

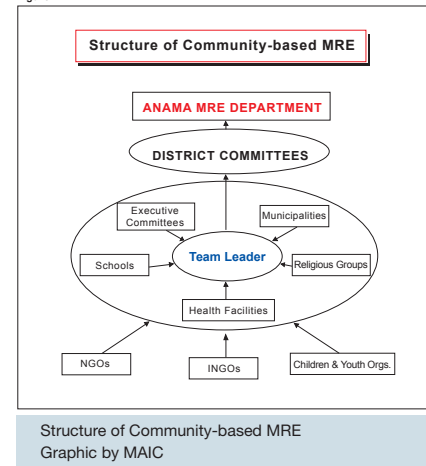
complete and the ceremony to hand over the cleared land to its owners is held.

ANAMA Director Nazim Ismaylov has signed a special order regarding the deminers’ own role in MRE. The order requires the field staff members to include MRE in their monthly activities along with their normal duties, particularly when outside conditions (i.e., rain, snow, wet soil) prevent demining operations. The deminers visit farm workers, schoolchildren or civilians in public places and hold MRE discussions and provide them with MRE materials.

The ANAMA MRE team has good relations with national and international organisations such as People to People International, UNICEF, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society. Close cooperation with PTPI provided funds for our programme which were used to produce promotional materials (pens and stickers) that had safe behaviour messages written on them. The materials are an effective means of communicating the MRE messages during trainings for different categories of populations, especially for children.

As an experienced MRE team, ANAMA organises and implements various types of projects among schoolchildren in contaminated communities. For example, a painting contest project, funded by UNICEF, was very successful in raising students’ interest in mine action. They learned about safe behaviour rules and formed a hatred of mines/UXO and of the war itself. The result of the contest showed that, as in all suffering children, the Azeri kids also want to strive for and live in peace. They do not want to be killed, disgraced or maimed by the men-

Figure 1



ace of war; they want to create and develop friendly relations with the other children of the world.

Application of these new promotional strategies has been successful for the MRE program. The number of mine/UXO incidents/accidents has decreased and the citizens of Azerbaijan have become more sensitive to landmines and the danger they present. ♦

*See Endnotes, Page*



Winners of the Painting Contest received prizes.



**Musa Jalalov** is currently the Manager of the MRE Department for ANAMA. He is the author of textbooks/manuals for children and teachers as well as several articles. He has volunteered for several international organisations and has participated in many seminars and workshops. In 1982 he began working as an English and German teacher until he was promoted to the position of school director. He graduated from the university in Baku.

Musa Jalalov  
MRE Department Manager  
Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA)  
65, Fizuli Str., Baku - AZ1014/  
Azerbaijan  
Tel: +994 12 596 37 28  
Fax: +994 12 497 44 27  
E-mail: [mjalalo@anama.baku.az](mailto:mjalalo@anama.baku.az)  
Web-site: <http://www.anama.baku.az>